

Governor Releases FY27 Budget

The Healey-Driscoll Administration has released their \$62.8B proposal for the FY27 Budget, which includes several key investments in public education across the Commonwealth. The information below highlights major education-related funding items, including updates from the accompanying supplemental budget that impact FY27 allocations.

As always, MASC will continue to closely monitor budget activity and any adjustments throughout the fiscal year. We will share updates and key action items ahead of the House budget in April and the Senate budget in May, and continue to keep members informed as the budget process moves forward. We're also looking ahead to our annual Advocacy Day (Day on the Hill) on Monday, March 30—we hope you'll register and join us. As always, please don't hesitate to reach out with any questions.

Chapter 70: Increases Chapter 70 education aid by \$241.8M (3.3%),

to \$7.6B total, meeting the final year of the funding schedule established in the 2019 Student Opportunity Act. The budget proposes a \$75 per pupil minimum aid increase this year - this is down from the historic high of \$150 per pupil aid in FY26 but is ticked up significantly from the baseline in years past (\$30 per pupil in FY25). The foundation budget calculation is based on a 2.67% inflation rate for all categories except benefits, which is increased by 8.29%.

Surtax Money Allocation: \$2.7B of the money from the "Fair Share" revenue is embedded directly into the FY27 budget proposal. An additional \$1.15B was filed as a companion supplemental budget bill which includes allocations for FY27.

- K-12 Spending from the Surtax Embedded in FY27 Budget:
 - Student Opportunity Act (Ch. 70) (\$550.6M)
 - Universal Free School Meals

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MASC Day on the Hill 2026

Join school committee members, superintendents, students, and education advocates from across MA on Monday, March 30 for MASC Day on the Hill 2026—a full day of learning, advocacy, and engagement on the issues shaping public education.

The day will feature timely policy discussions, legislative briefings, and practical advocacy guidance to help local leaders make their voices heard on Beacon Hill. MA vocational-technical culinary students will once again provide lunch.

The 2026 program will take place entirely at the Massachusetts State House, with the formal program held in Gardner Auditorium and lunch served in the Great Hall.

While the full agenda is still being finalized, attendees should plan to schedule meetings with their local legislators and/or staff in advance to discuss key education issues following lunch. Members are also encouraged to invite legislators to join them for lunch as an opportunity for informal conversation and connection.

As in past years, students from your district are welcome and encouraged to attend. There is no fee for student registration; however, all

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Salem schools superintendent will replace Tutwiler as state education secretary

Current Secretary of Education Patrick Tutwiler is leaving the position after three years in the role; Salem Schools Superintendent Stephen Zrike Jr. has been named to succeed him and will assume the position in March.

Tutwiler is leaving to become president and chief executive officer of Walker Therapeutic & Educational Programs, a Needham-based nonprofit serving children and youth with complex emotional, behavioral and learning needs. Early Education and Care Commissioner Amy Kershaw will serve as interim secretary until Zrike formally assumes the post in March.

During Tutwiler's tenure, Massachusetts education leaders faced a mix of progress and persistent challenges. The state expanded early literacy initiatives, increased access to early college and career pathways, stabilized and grew the child care system, and made universal free school meals permanent. At the same time, the state worked to realign graduation requirements after

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MASC goes to Washington



From left to right: Adam Lustig, Membership Director, NSBA; Stephanie Clougherty (MASC Vice President, Carver); Beverley Griffin Dunne (MASC President-Elect, Peabody/Essex Tech.); Bridget Garabedian (Chair, Division I, Tewksbury); Devin Sheehan, President, NSBA (Holyoke); Matthew Joseph, Assistant Superintendent, New Bedford; Senator Edward Markey; Dr. Joseph Allen, Director, Harvard Healthy Buildings Program; Verjeana McCotter-Jacobs, Executive Director, NSBA; Mildred Lefebvre, Northeast Region Director, NSBA (Holyoke); Denise Hurst (MASC President, Springfield); Michelle Bodin-Hettinger (MASC Secretary Treasurer, Marlborough)



From left to right: Mildred Lefebvre, MASC Immediate Past President, Holyoke; Bridget Garabedian, Chair, Division I, Tewksbury; Michelle Bodin-Hettinger, MASC Secretary Treasurer, Marlborough; Congresswoman Lori Trahan; Denise Hurst, MASC President, Springfield; Beverley Griffin Dunne, MASC President-Elect, Peabody/Essex Tech.; Stephanie Clougherty, MASC Vice President, Carver

Earlier this month, five members of the MASC Board of Directors joined over 500 other school board association leaders at NSBA's annual Leadership/Advocacy Program in Washington DC. Also in attendance from MA were MASC Past President, Devin Sheehan (Holyoke) who is currently President of the NSBA and MASC Immediate Past President Mildred Lefebvre (Holyoke), who represents the Northeast Region on the NSBA Board of Directors.

Participants to the event gained an "insider's edge" as they connected with staffers who actually draft education legislation, and heard from a bipartisan panel of Congressional aides on challenges to finding common ground and suggestions on how to successfully navigate political pressures. Additional sessions focused on 2026 legislative priorities; insights from Dr. Joseph Allen, Director of Harvard's Healthy Buildings Program, on how healthy (and unhealthy) school buildings impact student health and performance; and meetings with Congressional leaders.

MA Senator Edward Markey, one of the event's keynote speakers, met with the MASC delegation who presented him with MASC's 2025 Thomas P. (Tip) O'Neill Jr. award in recognition of the 30th anniversary of the E-rate program which Markey created as part of the Telecommunications Act in 1996 which has provided more than \$1 billion to MA to ensure students and educators have access to high-speed internet. Members also met with other Congressional staff and leaders including Congresswoman Lori Trahan, who represents communities on the North Shore.

DAY ON THE HILL AGENDA

- 9:30–10:00am | **Check-in** | State House, Gardner Auditorium
- 10:15am–2:15pm | **Program** | State House, Gardner Auditorium
- 12:30pm | **Lunch** | State House, Great Hall
- After 12:30pm | **Meetings with Legislators**

Invite your Legislators and their staff to lunch with us OR plan to visit their office(s) after lunch. **Register on the MASC website: www.masc.org.**

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- (\$198M)
- Literacy Launch \$25M
- Reimagining High School \$11.2M
- Mental Health Systems and Wraparounds \$6M
- K-12 Spending from the Surtax in Supplemental Budget:
 - Special Education Circuit Breaker Reserve \$150M
 - High Dosage Tutoring (\$25M)
 - K-12 Accelerating Achievement \$10M
 - Adult Basic Ed/ESOL \$5M

There appears to be a growing trend on Beacon Hill that the funding from the surtax—initially pitched as a mechanism to make investments in education and transportation above and beyond what the state already invests—is becoming an integral part of the state's operating budget.

Unrestricted General Government Aid (UGGA): Increases Unrestricted General Government Aid by \$33M, a 2.5% increase over FY2026. This brings the total UGGA investment to \$1.356B.

Circuit Breaker Reimbursement: Funded at \$652.6M in the FY27 budget, while the supplemental bill makes an additional \$150M available via a reserve fund for the same purpose. Overall, the \$802.7M investment represents a 19% increase YoY.

Charter School Reimbursement: Funded \$200.4M and is expected to fully fund the state's statutory obligation to mitigate Chapter 70 losses to charter schools.

Transportation: \$154.4M total in transportation reimbursements. Of that, the funding is broken down into the following buckets:

- \$112.3M for regional school transportation reimbursements
- \$6.8M for non-resident vocation transportation reimbursements (would be fully funded according to current estimates)
- \$35.2M for homeless student transportation under McKinney-Vento (up from \$28.6M last year)

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Core Program SOIs now being accepted

The Massachusetts School Building Authority (MSBA) is now accepting Core Program Statements of Interest ("SOIs") for consideration in 2026.

Submitting a Core Program SOI is the first step in the MSBA's process for school building construction, addition, and/or renovation grants. It allows districts to inform the MSBA about deficiencies that may exist in a local school facility and how those deficiencies inhibit the delivery of the district's educational program. The Core Program is intended for new construction, addition, and/or renovation projects.

The following provides program details and closing date information to guide local actions and approvals for those planning to file an SOI:

- If your district did not submit an SOI in 2025, please note there have been changes to the MSBA's SOI template that remain in effect for the 2026 SOI filing period:

- Any supporting materials required for the selection of Statutory Priority 1 or Priority 3, and/or any supplemental material a district elects to submit with the SOI must be uploaded in the SOI system to submit an SOI. Hard copies will no longer be accepted.

- The SOI closing date for districts submitting for consideration under the Core Program, intended for new construction, addition, and/or renovation projects, is Friday, April 17, 2026. Please reference the 2026 Core Program SOI Overview, located on our website, here, for more information.

The MSBA strongly urges districts to review the Core Program SOI submission period deadlines and schedule necessary votes as soon

as possible to meet the Friday, April 17, 2026, deadline for Core Program SOI submissions. Districts will not be able to submit an SOI without uploading the required vote documentation and any other material necessary.

As a reminder, the Accelerated Repair Program, which is intended for the partial or full replacement of roofs, windows/doors and heat pump conversions in existing school facilities, will again be accepting SOIs for consideration in January 2027, consistent with its biennial openings.

If you are considering submitting an SOI for the Core Program and/or have questions about the 2026 SOI process, or for more information: <https://www.massschoolbuildings.org/building/SOIs>.

Because YOU asked. . .

MASC has received calls from a number of districts asking how to file resolutions to be considered by the Delegate Assembly at the annual meeting in November.

Resolutions are relative to Association policies or requests that legislation be filed by the Association during the current legislative session. If your school committee wishes to submit a resolution for consideration, Article IX of the MASC by-laws stipulates two types of resolutions:

FORMAL: a formal resolution is submitted by at least five active member school committees located in at least two divisions. A formal resolution is automatically submitted to the Delegate Assembly.

INFORMAL: an informal resolution is submitted by a single member school committee. A by-laws provision permits the Board of Directors to present an informal resolution at the Delegate Assembly on the recommendation of the Resolutions Committee.

Please remember that school committees, not individual school committee members, are members of the Association. Therefore, a resolution must be submitted by vote of the member school committee.

Resolutions must adhere to the prescribed procedure for consideration. Serious thought should be given to the intent of the resolution, with careful attention to its wording to guarantee the resolution says what you intent to say. If your resolution is not self-explanatory, please include a rationale. Resolutions and their rationale will be printed in the Delegate Manual, which is sent to all MASC members.

If the resolution will ultimately result in the filing of legislation, please include the following language: Now therefore be it resolved that the MASC file legislation which would have the effect of. . .

The official Resolutions form is included in the Forms Booklet that is sent annually to all members and Executive Assistants in mid-March, and is also posted at that time on the MASC website. Proposed resolutions for consideration at the 2026 Delegate Assembly must be received on/before June 1. This year's annual meeting will be held at the Doubletree Hilton North Shore in Danvers on Friday, November 6 during the Joint Conference.

For further clarification, contact your field director or call MASC: 617-523-8454.

Secretary of Education

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the MCAS was removed as a graduation standard in 2024, prompting ongoing debate over how to balance rigor, equity and local control. Public schools also continue to confront declining enrollment, lingering early literacy gaps, and the difficulty of rebuilding academic momentum as districts adapt to modern pressures intensified by the pandemic.

Currently in his sixth year as Superintendent in Salem, Zrike has overseen improvements in attendance and MCAS performance, expanded full-day prekindergarten and strengthened dual-language and early college programs.

Before that, he served as receiver-superintendent in Holyoke, and earlier as superintendent in Wakefield. He began his career as a fifth-grade teacher in Andover.

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School Meals Reimbursement: \$198M for universal free school meals, up \$18M from last year.

Rural School Aid: \$20M, up \$8M YoY, for the grant program that helps districts facing the challenge of declining enrollment to identify ways to form regional school districts or regionalize certain school services to create efficiencies. The 2022 Special Commission on Rural Schools recognized a need for \$60M annually.

Early Literacy Tutoring: \$25M for the second year of a high-dosage early literacy tutoring initiative. The program supports public schools and districts in partnering with approved providers to address pandemic-related learning loss and accelerate literacy growth for students in grades K–3.

Universal Pre-K Initiative: \$36.95M for universal access to high-quality pre-K through the Commonwealth Preschool Partnership Initiative (CPPI) to meet Governor Healey's goal of delivering universal, high-quality preschool funding for four-year-olds in all Gateway Cities by the end of 2026.

Thursday, February 26 | 6:00pm | Division I meeting

Zoom: link posted on website

Friday, March 6 | Noon | Learning Lunch

Topic: Budgeting as a School Committee

Saturday, March 7 | Charting the Course

Petersham Center School, Petersham

Friday, March 13 | Noon-1:00pm | Division III virtual meeting

Topic: Chapter 70 and the Student Opportunity Act

Wednesday, March 18 | 6:00pm | Division IX Meet & Greet

Zoom: link posted on website

Saturday, March 21 | Charting the Course

R. H. Conwell Elementary School, Worthington

Friday, March 27 | Noon | MASC Learning Lunch

Topic: Legislative Process (originally scheduled for 4/10)

Monday, March 30 | Day on the Hill | The State House, Boston

UPCOMING
EVENTS

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